

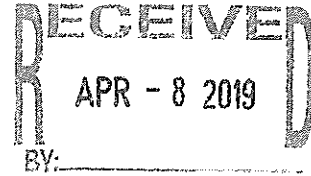
DATE: February 26, 2019

TO: Greenbelt City Council

CC: Nicole Ard, City Manager
Acting Capt. Seung Lee, Greenbelt Police Department Liaison
Mary Johnson, City Liaison

FROM: Public Safety Advisory Committee
Dr. Laura Kressler, Chair

SUBJECT: Emergency Siren Referral



On June 8, 2016, the Council made a referral to the Public Safety Advisory Committee to "Refer the idea of utilizing warning sirens/fire department vehicles with sirens to alert residents of emergency situations."

The Public Safety Advisory Committee discussed this issue at its February 5, 2019 meeting and feels that given the way technology has changed in the last ten to 15 years using a fixed emergency siren system or even fire department vehicles with sirens to alert people to emergency situations is no longer the best method for notifying the residents of the City. Given that most residents possess and regularly use cell phones and that the County and National Emergency Alert Systems are becoming more commonly recognized and tested, it would seem to be the best method of notification.

Committee members agreed that a siren would more likely confuse our residents as sirens haven't been used in a many, many years. Fixed sirens such as the older type air raid sirens require monthly testing and maintenance to insure they work properly when needed. Sirens would require a massive education drive to insure people understood what a siren meant and what they were expected to do when they heard it. With present day cell phone alerts, we would have the benefit of not only notifying a large number of residents no matter where they are physically located, but we would also be able to provide detailed information about the alert. This would be less likely to create confusion and fear. Additionally, this would add the benefit of notifying family members who were not presently within the audible range of the sirens. This would be especially beneficial to parents with children in Greenbelt schools or who were home alone.

CC: Council, Rick Powers, Dale, Bulley

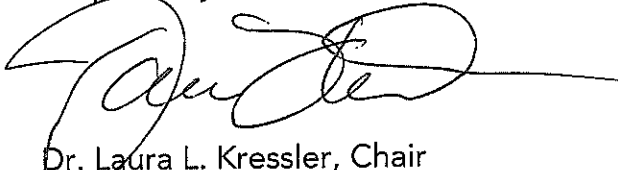
There are still some individuals that do not possess cellular phones even today. However, with the high number of people of who do possess them, it would be very likely that people with cell phones would share information with those around them quite freely. This is demonstrated quite well when various tests of the National Emergency Alert System have been activated. City level alerts can be run through the current Everbridge application or a similar cellular app.

The best use of resources at this point would be to continue educating the city residents about the City's alert system, how to sign up and how they can customize it. This information should be provided in all new resident packets, City website, City newsletters, GATe-TV broadcasts of city information, City cable channels, social media, City page of the Greenbelt News Review and in regularly placed ads in the Greenbelt News Review. Additionally, an annual article describing the alert system and why it's important to use it could be run in the Greenbelt News Review and linked on all the above listed resources. Lastly, a brochure could be created to detail this information as well. This could be shared in City buildings and linked on the City website.

Since this referral was made, there have been several nationwide tests of the National Alert System. These tests have shown that a cell phone-based alert system is widely accepted and is a reliable method for communication of emergency information. The committee feels that using Everbridge or a similar text alert system would be a better system for the City to use for municipal level emergencies requiring notification of all residents.

Thank you for this referral!

Respectfully,



Dr. Laura L. Kressler, Chair
Public Safety Advisory Committee